

## **INTRODUCTION TO ROSWELL'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2025**

This is an introduction to Roswell's Comprehensive Plan 2025. It describes previous comprehensive planning efforts, the overall content and organization of the plan, provisions for amendments and updates of the plan, purposes and uses of the plan, and the citizen participation component used in initially preparing and adopting the 2020 Comprehensive Plan and the 2025 major update of the plan.

### **PREVIOUS COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING EFFORTS**

Roswell's first land use plan was developed in 1969 and 1970 using funds from the Urban Planning Assistance Program authorized by Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954. Roswell adopted a Future Land Use and Thoroughfare Plan in 1970. A Roswell Development Plan was adopted during the fall of 1978. In the late 1980s, Roswell's planning staff engaged in a major citizen participation effort and updated the development plan to the year 2010. In 1992, the City submitted a revised Comprehensive Plan to meet the standards and requirements of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. In response to the Georgia Development Impact Fee Act of 1990 and subsequent state administrative rules, Roswell prepared and adopted a major amendment to the Comprehensive Plan in 1992; this amendment established an impact fee method and a capital improvement element to support implementation of development impact fees (roads, recreation and parks, and fire protection). The City updated the Comprehensive Plan 2010 in 1996, as required by the five-year interval for plan updates established by state administrative rules.

In 1999, the City hired a planning director and contracted with a team of planning consultants to prepare a new Comprehensive Plan to guide growth and development to the year 2020. The Comprehensive Plan 2020 represented approximately ten (10) months of intensive effort, from June 1999 to March 2000, by the planning staff of the Department of Community Development and the consulting team. It was adopted November 6, 2000.

### **THE 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Roswell, along with Fulton County and its other municipalities, was required by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to completely update its Comprehensive Plan by October 31, 2005 (its "recertification date"). New rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs went into effect January 1, 2004, and the Comprehensive Plan update was required to conform to those rules. While the basic tenants of the 2020 plan were sound, the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update focused on compliance with the new (2004) minimum planning standards.

In undertaking the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update, the City had decided the policy direction and vision associated with the 2020 plan was generally adequate, even if five years old. Also, the Community Development Department and City Council believed that the extensive public participation process followed in developing the 2020 Comprehensive Plan did not need to be repeated. Nonetheless, an appropriate participation strategy was followed in updating the 2020 Comprehensive Plan for the year 2025.

### **ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT**

The Comprehensive Plan 2025 is organized into two major documents – (1) this document, which contains fourteen chapters and is referred to as a "technical report" or "compliance

document” since it contains technical data and must demonstrate consistency with the data requirements of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ minimum standards for local planning; and (2) a “community agenda” which contains the City’s vision statement and a summary of the most salient features of the plan. The community agenda, with its provision of pictures, is intended to be much more “readable” to the citizens and policy makers of Roswell. The technical report or community assessment (which spans nearly 500 pages), on the other hand, is unlikely to retain the attention of readers.

In addition to making the most important parts of the plan more “readable” to the general public, there is another reason for dividing the Comprehensive Plan into an assessment report and a community agenda. At the time this Comprehensive Plan update was prepared (late 2004 to early 2005), the Georgia Department of Community Affairs was formally considering a major change to the minimum planning standards for local planning, one that emphasized a two-part plan document as generally described here. To the degree possible, Roswell’s 2025 Plan attempts to conform to the new (2005) standards, while nonetheless requiring a demonstration of compliance with the standards effective January 1, 2004.

The Comprehensive Plan 2025 is organized so that it follows the required elements of comprehensive plans, as required by the minimum planning standards adopted by administrative rule by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and effective January 1, 2004. However, the Plan goes considerably beyond the minimum required elements by including chapters on urban design and neighborhoods. It also divides the natural and cultural resources element into separate chapters on natural resources and historic preservation.

The data requirements for meeting the January 1, 2004 minimum standards are rather elaborate. As a result, there are many tables of data in order to demonstrate compliance with the various comprehensive planning standards of the state. Some of the chapters are lengthy because of the need to provide data that address all considerations in the minimum standards. The entire document of the Comprehensive Plan 2025 is available to those persons that require, for research purposes, considerable detail on a given Plan Element (population, housing, economic development, etc.). For those persons interested only in the overall direction suggested in the plan, the “Vision and Community Agenda” part of the Comprehensive Plan should suffice.

## **STUDY AREA**

The 2020 Comprehensive Plan had a “study area” that included some unincorporated areas in addition to the city limits (see Map 9.1). The unincorporated portion of the study area was included in 2000 to provide data on population, housing, and land use conditions in the event that those unincorporated areas are annexed in the future. The choice of including unincorporated areas in the 2020 plan was, in itself, not a policy decision. The study area boundary represented the outer boundary of what the planning staff and planning consulting team believed would be the limits of Roswell’s future municipal boundary by the end of the planning horizon. The 2025 Comprehensive Plan does not retain and update data for the study area used in the 2020 plan. However, since some of the information organized around planning areas in the 2020 plan is still valid and informative, it was retained (see the Land Use Element).

## **PURPOSES AND USES OF THE PLAN**

The Comprehensive Plan is sometimes called by other names such as a general plan, development plan, master plan, policy plan, and growth management plan. Regardless of what it is called, there are many major characteristics of a comprehensive plan. First, it is a physical

plan intended to guide the physical development (and redevelopment) of the City by describing how, why, when, and where to build, rebuild, or preserve aspects of the community. Second, the Comprehensive Plan covers a long-range planning horizon of 20 years (i.e., to the year 2025). Third, the Comprehensive Plan is “comprehensive” in that it covers the entire city limits, plus it encompasses all the functions that make a community work and considers the interrelatedness of functions. The Comprehensive Plan is based on the foundation that if the City knows where it wants to go, it possesses better prospects of getting there.

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve numerous purposes. It provides a primary basis for evaluating all significant future development proposals, whether they are requests for rezoning, applications for subdivision plat approval, petitions for design review or demolition of a historic structure, and others. The Comprehensive Plan is also intended to provide guidance for preparing capital improvement programs and budgets. Business persons, investors, and developers can learn from the Plan what the future vision of the community is, as well as the overall direction and intensity of new growth and redevelopment. Market analysts and researchers can draw on the wealth of data provided in the Comprehensive Plan for their own specific needs.

The ultimate clients, however, for the Comprehensive Plan are the Mayor and City Council and the Roswell Planning Commission. By adopting the Plan, the Mayor and City Council have made an extremely important expression of their consent and support for the vision, quality community objectives, goals, policies, and strategies contained herein.

#### **AMENDMENT AND UPDATE OF THE PLAN**

As an adopted expression of the City’s policy, the Comprehensive Plan must be maintained in a manner that it still reflects the desires of the current Mayor and City Council. Developers, the general public, and other agencies have a right to rely on the adopted Comprehensive Plan as an expression of current policy. In cases where it is determined that a particular policy, goal, program, or statement is no longer a valid expression of the City’s policy, then the Plan needs to be amended, on a timely basis. Otherwise, the validity of the Plan is weakened, and those that have relied on the Comprehensive Plan when it is not a reflection of current policy have then been, in effect, misled.

As a local government charging development impact fees, Roswell is required by state administrative rules to prepare and adopt annual updates to the short-term work program and capital improvement element of the Comprehensive Plan. Local governments are required to update the Comprehensive Plan every five years, and at that time, they are encouraged to provide major rewrites of the Comprehensive Plan. Regardless, the Comprehensive Plan must be comprehensively revised every 10 years.

Amendments may be considered by the Roswell Mayor and City Council whenever it finds it necessary to do so. Amendments should take place any time that Roswell annexes additional unincorporated land, so as to include the area on the future land use map and to update population estimates and projections as appropriate. When there is a significant change in policy by the Mayor and City Council, for instance a decision to drop a major capital improvement project that is described in the adopted plan, the Plan should be amended.

Amendments must comply with procedures established in state rules. Major amendments, or those that raise some greater-than-local issue or consideration, are required to be reviewed by

the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The annual update is considered a major amendment because it affects the degree to which the City meets minimum planning standards and procedures.

### **THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION COMPONENT**

As part of Roswell's Comprehensive Plan 2020 process (completed in the year 2000), the City provided a broad range of public participation opportunities. Participation included the City's elected officials, advisory committees, review boards and Planning Commission, as well as neighborhood associations and the business community.

The City with consultant assistance conducted five Community-Oriented Visioning Forums to assist in establishing the 2020 Plan's vision statement, guiding principles, and objectives. Four of the forums were held (1999) in different geographic areas of the City to promote greater participation by residents. A fifth meeting was provided specifically for the business community. Starting with the goals and policies currently contained in the Comprehensive Plan, the City with consulting assistance conducted an intensive, interactive process at each forum to solicit participants' opinions regarding desirable changes. Once the draft 2020 Comprehensive Plan elements had been prepared, two citywide forums were held for presentation of the drafts by the consultant and staff. The citywide forums were held March 28 and March 29, 2000. Detailed minutes of these meetings were published.

Given the extensive nature of the visioning process completed in 2000, Roswell's leaders decided that it did not need to repeat the extensive effort involved in the 2020 Plan visioning exercises. It was also determined that the overall vision established in 2000 for the 2020 Plan was generally adequate. An initial public hearing was held September 20, 2004. For the 2025 Plan, two visioning workshops were held by the City and its consultants in 2004. The public hearings required prior to authorizing transmittal of the draft Comprehensive Plan were held by the Roswell Planning Commission in April 2005 and by the Mayor and City Council in May 2005.

### **STATEWIDE PLANNING GOALS AND QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES**

Local comprehensive plans must address how they implement the statewide planning goals and "quality community objectives." Those goals and objectives are included in this introduction, and they are adopted locally. They serve as guides to the preparation of Roswell's 2025 Comprehensive Plan. The quotes indicate the statements are verbatim from the state's quality community objectives.

#### **State Goal – Economic Development**

"To achieve a growing and balanced economy, consistent with the prudent management of the state's resources, that equitably benefits all segments of the population."

1. **"Regional Identity Objective:** Regions should promote and preserve an 'identity,' defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics."
2. **"Growth Preparedness Objective:** Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth,

appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.”

3. **“Appropriate Business Objective:** The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.”
4. **“Educational Opportunities Objective:** Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.”
5. **“Employment Options Objective:** A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.”

#### **State Goal – Natural and Historic Resources**

“To conserve and protect the environmental, natural and historic resources of Georgia’s communities, regions, and the state.”

1. **“Heritage Preservation Objective:** The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community’s character.”
2. **“Open Space Preservation Objective:** New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.”
3. **“Environmental Protection Objective:** Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.”
4. **“Regional Cooperation Objective:** Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.”

#### **State Goal – Community Facilities and Services**

“To ensure that public facilities throughout the state have the capacity, and are in place when needed, to support and attract growth and development and/or maintain and enhance the quality of life of Georgia’s residents.”

1. **“Transportation Alternatives Objective:** Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available. Greater use of alternative transportation should be encouraged.”

2. **“Regional Solutions Objective:** Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.”

### **State Goal – Housing**

“To ensure that residents of the state have access to adequate and affordable housing.”

1. **“Housing Opportunities Objective:** Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.”

### **State Goal – Land Use**

“To ensure that land resources are allocated for uses that will accommodate the state’s economic development, natural and historic resources, community facilities, and housing and to protect and improve the quality of life of Georgia’s residents.”

1. **“Traditional Neighborhood Objective:** Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.”
2. **“Infill Development Objective:** Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.”
3. **“Sense of Place Objective:** Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.”